



Inter-Parliamentary Union
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Speech by Dr. Tulia Ackson, IPU President

22nd G7 Speakers' Meeting

Verona, Italy, 6 September 2024

Mr. President of the Senate of Italy,
Mr. President of the Chamber of Deputies of Italy,
Fellow Speakers of Parliament,
Ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to thank you for inviting me to this august gathering to address the important theme of *The G7 for Africa and the Mediterranean: common challenges for stability and growth*.

I would also like to congratulate you on this excellent initiative to encourage further cooperation between the parliamentary communities of Africa, the Mediterranean region and the G7 countries.

The highly inter-connected nature of the many challenges currently facing the world requires us to find common ground and coordinate our efforts more than ever before to define targeted strategies in response to those challenges.

Partnership, therefore, is key to a holistic approach which can guide our actions towards meaningful results and sustainable impact.

The theme of this session is a perfect illustration of the need for a stronger partnership to ensure the well-being of the people we represent. Africa and the Mediterranean basin are critical regions – they are the very cradle of civilization, rich in resources, culture and human potential. Any effort to forge a path towards stability and growth in this region is not only an act of solidarity but can also form a cornerstone for global security and economic prosperity.

At this juncture, let me pay tribute to the G7 leaders, who have reaffirmed their support for a billion-dollar infrastructure programme for Africa, in particular through the **Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment** (PGII). I would also like to take the opportunity to acknowledge Italy's **Mattei Plan**, an ambitious strategic project for development cooperation and investment in Africa.

These are concrete examples of partnerships that we, as members of Parliament, should help to promote and implement effectively. Indeed, we have a particular responsibility to deliver for our people and to hold our own governments fully accountable for the successful execution of such development and investment projects.

Dear colleagues,

The **African Union's Agenda 2063** is an important benchmark for all development actions on the continent, especially since it is a programme based on the aspirations of the people of Africa for their own future. The seven pillars of the agenda: inclusive growth and sustainable development, a united and integrated continent, good governance, peace, a strong shared identity, recognizing the potential of all African people, and Africa as a strong, united, resilient and influential global player and partner – are key to our efforts to respond to the various challenges the world is facing. Africa is home to the youngest population in the world which, if harnessed properly, could be a driving force for global innovation and growth.

Trade is recognized as an engine of growth that can confer prosperity and resilience on our economies. The disastrous consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic have confirmed the potential of trade. In this regard, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), a single market to boost intra-African trade

and trade across all African economic sectors, is a tool which requires reinvigorated support. And this support should start with the Guided Trade Initiative (GTI).

With this in mind, I also invite you to support the efforts of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO, a joint initiative of the IPU and the European Parliament, which since 2002 has been mobilizing and harmonizing the efforts of the parliamentary community in favour of prosperous global trade. It is important that our parliaments support the implementation of the recommendations of this joint initiative in our respective countries.

Dear colleagues,

Women and young people are all too often left behind, even though they can make a decisive contribution to the development of our countries. In recognition of this decisive role, the IPU has taken action over many years to empower and involve women and young people at all levels of the decision-making process. Campaigns such as *I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament!* have been organized with some very encouraging results. I believe that these are initiatives that we should relay to our various parliaments and also make them part of our priorities within the framework of our partnerships. Let's also endeavour to engage further with civil society, the valuable contribution of which is sorely needed.

I cannot underscore enough that we must urgently end the Mediterranean's record of being the deadliest sea in the world as a direct result of **illegal migration**. Migration has existed throughout human history and it is undeniable that it has made a substantial contribution to the sociopolitical and economic wealth of many nations. We should reflect more on how to embrace migration's added value, while at the same time making sure that in the countries of origin the right elements are in place for real and sustainable development in the service of the people. Several initiatives have already been implemented and others, such as those of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, are underway. We must work to guarantee their success and ensure their effective impact. We must also not forget that future migration patterns will inevitably be influenced by the climate crisis, another global challenge which we can only address by working together.

Dear colleagues,

Peace and security are prerequisite conditions for sustainable development and must be at the heart of any strategy to that end. Unfortunately, Africa continues to be plagued by terrorism – propagated by Boko Haram, Ansar-Dine and Al Qaeda, to name but a few – as well as violent pushbacks against democracy and the rule of law, as evidenced by the coups d'état experienced by several West African countries due to insecurity and mismanagement. Just as peace is a prerequisite for development, the opposite is also true – peace cannot be achieved without prosperity and opportunity for the people. Furthermore, we need effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels, starting with strong and resilient parliaments.

I very much believe in the need for collective initiatives and partnerships to fight against terrorism. At the IPU, we continue to build on our *Call of the Sahel* initiative, which is working on several different fronts to target the roots of terrorism and violent extremism in this region of Africa. I encourage the G7 parliamentary community to lend its support to the IPU's efforts and ensure that good governance prevails throughout the continent.

I must mention here our deep concern over the increasing divide we see in world affairs, which many have described as a "new Cold War", and its implications for Africa. For almost a decade now, there has been talk of a *new* "scramble for Africa" between global powers. Initially, this was discussed primarily with reference to rivalries in matters of trade and technology. But the military aggression against Ukraine – with its devastating impact on food security across the African continent - has also resulted in a heightened competition over resources and the scramble for the diplomatic support of the 54 African countries, all with increasing militarized tones.

There is a tangible risk that the tensions between global powers **result in outright conflict and proxy wars**, which can further compound the systemic instability and fragility of some African nations. I believe that, collectively, we all have a responsibility to steer away from outdated security concepts based on zero-sum games and bloc confrontations, which pose enormous dangers not only to the African continent but also to the entire world. We believe that a democratic, inclusive, and peaceful international system in the 21st century must be grounded on two very simple yet powerful concepts: **human security** – or the idea that peace needs to be ingrained in compassion for the human condition that speaks to the roots of conflict and leaves no one behind, and **common security** – or the idea that one nation's security cannot be achieved at the expense of another.

It is based on this approach that, earlier this year at our 148th Assembly, the IPU membership adopted the **Geneva Declaration on Parliamentary Diplomacy**, with a clear message that strong parliamentary diplomacy can help promote peace in the world. It is time for us to rebuild trust and solidarity, and to embrace an inclusive and peaceful international system grounded in the strict and equal observance of the fundamental principles of the UN Charter and of international law. The IPU is on record condemning military aggression and the illegal annexation of the territories of another State. By the same token, whether it's the war against Ukraine or the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza, we believe deeply in the founding principle of the IPU of political dialogue – not war – to seek peaceful solutions.

Ladies and gentlemen,

2024 is a pivotal year for the global multilateral system. In the coming weeks, the United Nations will be holding its **Summit of the Future**, and it is hoped that the outcome, the Pact for the Future, will establish a new international consensus on how to address the challenges of the present and secure a brighter future for generations to come. The IPU and its Members have worked hard to ensure that the role of parliaments in global governance is acknowledged, supported and strengthened in this document. Parliamentarians are uniquely placed to understand the challenges faced by their constituents, and every effort should be made to include parliamentary voices in international processes.

We are also looking forward to July next year, when the **Sixth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament** will be held in Geneva, bringing together parliamentary leaders from around the world to advance their vision of a strong, effective and democratic multilateral system. I hope to see you all at this important event, which comes around only once every five years.

Once again, I thank you for the opportunity to address your G7 Speakers' Meeting and wish you well in the deliberations ahead.

Thank you.